

026  
CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

A

CONCIO AD CLERUM,

PREACHED IN GRACE CHURCH,

PITTSBURGH, NOVEMBER 18, 1863,

AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST GENERAL SYNOD OF THE GERMAN  
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA.

BY THE

REV. J. W. NEVIN, D. D

---

PUBLISHED BY THE SYNOD.

---

PITTSBURGH, PA.

PRINTED BY J. McMILLIN, STEAM PRINTER, 147 WOOD STREET, COR. VIRGIN ALLEY.

1863.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2017 with funding from

This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

## CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

---

1 COR. 1: 21-24. For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Man was formed originally in the image of God, with the power of possessing, through union with Him, a perfectly blessed life, that should have no end.

From this estate of righteousness he was miserably hurled and cast down, by the catastrophe of the Adamic Fall; so that we find him now naturally estranged from his Maker, and for this reason incapable, also, of knowing or reaching the happiness for which he was created.

Still, the law of his life remains what it was at the first. He can have no completeness in himself without God. His nature has its highest meaning in the idea of religion; and the one great problem of all religion for him, in the end, is the restoration of his being to its original dignity and glory, as something which is to be found only in union and fellowship with the Fountain of all life in a higher world.

The universal want of our fallen humanity, whether clear to its own consciousness or not—the cry with which its misery may be said everywhere and always to pierce the heavens—is comprehended first in the old complaint: “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” and then, again, in the anxious question: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?” Through all ages, the race labors

under a sense of banishment from the Divine Presence, and owns its deepest need to be redemption and salvation from the power of this overwhelming curse.

In Paganism, we have what must be considered the endeavor of the world, on a large scale, to solve this great problem, by its own resources simply, without the aid of revelation. It is nature everywhere struggling to reach and possess the supernatural and divine in its own fallen sphere. This vast, titanic experiment comes to its highest form at last, in the philosophy and religion of Greece. All ends here, however, as before, in the mockery of unreal, self-projected and self-reflecting speculation. It is an abortive attempt to scale the heavens, by piling Pelion upon Ossa, in the way of lofty imagination and thought. There is no escape in it, after all, from the power of the earth; it comes to no actual conjunction of the finite with the infinite; the gulf that separates the human and the divine, remains the same yawning, unbridged and impassable chasm, that it was before. The gods of Greece are only personifications of the powers of nature, or at best deifications of men themselves. Where it comes to severer thought, as in the old philosophical schools, they vanish into thin air, resolve themselves into unsubstantial abstractions. Throughout we have the creations of the human spirit, its imaginings, its aspirations, its mere reachings after what it needs, and has not, as the complement of its own being, substituted vainly for the proper objects and realities themselves, which it is endeavored to apprehend in this purely subjective way. The process, of course, brings with it no salvation, no redemption from the power of this evil world. On the contrary, it serves but to bring more fully into view the helpless misery of our race, sinking it more and more deeply into the bondage of corruption and sin. It is a sad picture of heathenism, in this view, which St. Paul gives us in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where its boasted wisdom is so graphically described as stultifying itself down to the lowest depths of brutish folly. "Professing themselves to be wise," it is said, with terrible emphasis, "men became fools." So in the passage now before us, we are told that the Gentile world, having been left to itself, in the wise ordering of Him who sees the end from the beginning, to work out, as it best might, the

problem of life and salvation, came short entirely of this great object. The experiment was a miserable failure throughout. In the midst even of its highest culture, as it meets us among the Greeks, "the world by wisdom knew not God."

It was an immense advantage, in every way, as compared with this, which belonged to the Jews; chiefly, as the Apostle tells us, "because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." They were not thrown upon their own resources simply, to find out the highest end of life; they enjoyed from the beginning, the unspeakable benefit of Divine Revelation. The process toward a reconciliation or one-making (at-one-ment) of the sundered natures of God and man, started here, as in the necessity of the case it must do, ever to become effectual and real, not from below, but from above. It was the bowing of the heavens, as it were, to kiss the earth. God spake at sundry times, and in divers manners, by the prophets, making known his presence, and proclaiming his will. It was still, however, not such a revelation, as of itself amounted at once to a full bringing together of the two spheres between which it served as a medium of correspondence. This was the end indeed to which it looked from the beginning, and in which alone it was possible for the process to show itself at last, true and complete. But, in its Old Testament character, it was only a preparation for what was thus to come in the fullness of time. It was as a sound going before the proper advent of Jehovah—a voice from behind the veil giving notice of his presence, but not the very manifestation of his presence itself in the world. God made himself known through seers and prophets, by visions and supernatural signs; but, with all this, it came to no full, abiding union and conjunction between the world of nature and the world of grace. There was no actual redemption, in this way, of the human race; no real solution of the great question of salvation; the most that was gained for the faith of believers, was the promise and firm assurance of a deliverance, which was coming, though not yet come.

The law, we are told, made nothing perfect or complete; it was, at best, the shadow only of good things to come, and not the very image, or real presence, of the things themselves; its whole economy being so ordered by the Holy Ghost, as to show

“that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” Hence, of the Old Testament saints in general, it is said: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb. 11: 13, 39, 40.)

Judaism formed thus a direct, positive preparation for Christianity, as Paganism served also to prepare the way for it, negatively and indirectly, by showing the spiritual necessities of the world, and the vanity of its endeavors to satisfy them by its own wisdom and power. But it lay now in the nature of things, that the preparation for the Gospel here also, as in the other case, might be so abused by the human mind, as to be a hindrance rather than a help to the introduction of the Gospel itself. It was possible for the Jew to rest in his merely partial and incomplete revelation, as though it amounted to all that the redemption of the world required in this form, and were sufficient of itself to bring man into full union and harmony with his Maker. And so it turned out, in fact, as we know, with the great body of the Jewish nation. Their theism became, to a large extent, a sort of abstract deism, in which the idea of God was held steadily on the outside of the world, as a power working from beyond it, and into it, without any real entrance, after all, into its actual life and history. In this view, his word was apprehended as something more outward than inward; a sound, (*bath kol*, or “daughter of the voice,”) uttered, as it were, from the clouds, (John 12: 28-30,) which was to be received and held then, in a purely traditional and mechanical way. The letter that enslaves and kills, was made to stand for the spirit which leads to freedom and life. There was an approach of the divine toward the human; but it was not met here by the proper receptivity of faith; and so it remained as before, in its own sphere, an object of notional apprehension only, rather than of any real appropriation, on the part of men. The relation between the natural and the supernatural was thus everywhere, for the half-faith of the Jew, more or less abrupt; the two orders of existence stood apart, without any mediating or reconciling common nature; so that the presence of the supernatural in the ordinary world could be thought of only as something magical, a sort of apparition,



or unearthly oracle, breaking in upon the settled order of things, and passing away again in the character of a mere outward miracle or sign. In this way, the Jewish mind was trained to the habit of seeking and expecting the solution of the highest questions in religion, through the medium of such external signs and wonders; just as it was characteristic of the Greek, to aim at the same object, by means of philosophical wisdom and speculation. So, in particular, it was held, that the coming of the Messiah, the great hope of the Jewish nation, must be proclaimed and authenticated in this extraordinary way; and it became, accordingly, the burden of their captious resistance to the claims of Jesus Christ, we are told, to demand of him "a sign from heaven." They were not content with the evidence of his divinity, which shined through his own person, and revealed itself in doctrines and miracles suitable to his heavenly mission, from day to day. All this was too natural, too entirely human, we may say, as exhibited in the Word made flesh, to satisfy their pre-conception of the way in which the Messiah ought to appear. They must have a sign from heaven, some outward, supernatural demonstration, apart from his own person, proceeding directly from the unseen world, and certifying the truth of his mission. To his declaration: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," they oppose at once their previous presumption: "What sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe thee; what dost thou work?"

And thus that took place, which St. Paul so strikingly brings into view in our text. When the Son of God came into the world, the Jew no less than the Gentile was found, as a general thing, unprepared and unable to acknowledge the glorious manifestation. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Opposite as they were to each other in their modes of thought, the Jewish and the Greek minds were alike barred, by their previous thinking, to the entrance of the true light, as it now offered itself to their view under this unexpected form. "The Jews require a sign," says the Apostle, "and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

“But unto them which are called,” he adds immediately “both Jews and Greeks, Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God.” What Judaism on the one hand, and Gentilism on the other, were vainly endeavoring to reach from opposite false presumptions, which were alike shattered by all they were able to see in the Incarnate Word, was here nevertheless gloriously revealed in fact, in a way infinitely transcending their utmost imagination and thought. Here was in truth the solution of the great problem of religion—the full satisfaction of the necessary conditions of redemption and salvation, under the most real and actual form. In the person of Jesus Christ, God had become man, and man was exalted into living union with God. The two worlds which stood asunder before, divided and separated by the fearful curse of sin, showed themselves in this great mystery once more reconciled and brought together. Christ stood among men not as a prophet simply or inspired teacher, but as the very fullness itself of the Godhead bodily. In this respect, he was more immeasurably than all the signs and wonders of the Old Testament. He was himself the Miracle of miracles, the root and principle of the supernatural in the world under the most perfectly natural form, the bearer in one word of the powers of a new creation, before whose presence old things were destined to pass away and all things to become new. He was thus of course more immeasurably also than all the wisdom of the Grecian schools. In Him was life—not speculation only, but far reaching thought; “and the life became the light of men. He stood among men as the impersonation and full living embodiment of the truth itself. To the philosophers of Athens Epicureans and Stoics, Paul seemed to be a babbling, and a setter forth of strange gods, “because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17 : 18); it was to them simply a “new doctrine,” which offered a theme for curious inquiry and debate, and from which in such view they were so ready to turn away with indifference or downright contempt. And yet here in fact was a form of knowledge, which neither the massive mind of Aristotle, nor the soaring genius of Plato nor even the almost prophetic vision of Socrates, had ever been able to reach. Foolishness it might seem to the common gaze



of the world ; but wisdom it was in truth, such as the angels desired to look into, and such as must turn into folly at last all wisdom besides.

We have thus presented to us in strong relief the thought, which to one who considers it properly may be said to underlie the entire teaching of the New Testament, namely, that Jesus Christ is himself the sum and substance of the whole glorious gospel of the Blessed God, which he came into the world to proclaim. He appeared among men, not simply as the witness and revealer of things that were true, apart from his testimony, though previously unknown ; but as the very fountain and cause of that truth itself, which he declared to be true. His own advent in the flesh was the constitution of Christianity, considered as a new revelation from God. It brought life and immortality to light, by bringing into the world a principle of superiority over death and the power of sin, which had not been in it before. The law, as an outward rule, was given by Moses ; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The universal Gospel lay hid in his person from the very beginning. All its privileges and powers, and its opportunities and resources of salvation, all its doctrines and all its precepts, were comprised in the constitution of his theanthropic life. His incarnation drew after it, with necessary consequence, and in the way of sure historical development, the whole work of redemption, as it was wrought out subsequently through his death and resurrection, including all that was required for the regeneration and salvation of men on to the time of his second advent, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." He was himself, in this view, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation. He is our Peace, says the Apostle ; the conditions of atonement, satisfaction for sin, and reconciliation with God, are at hand for us, in his presence. He is made of God unto us, it is said, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Nay, he is declared to be our life, in the fullest sense of the term. "I am the resurrection and the life," we hear him saying ; and then again : "Because I live, ye shall live also." Hence that bold word of St. Paul to the Colossians : "Ye are dead, and your life is hid

with Christ in God ; when Christ who is our life shall appear then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3: 3, 4)

Just so soon as we come to conceive of the Gospel in this way, we are brought to feel the full vanity of all those heresies by which the Christian salvation is made to stand in the teaching of Christ only, or in his holy example, or in any work whatever wrought out by him in a merely external way. His teaching and example do indeed carry with them a saving force ; and the mighty acts which he has wrought for our redemption are of course of full efficacy for their own purpose and end. To hear his words, to do his commandments, to walk in his steps, is to enter into life. We are healed by his stripes ; and his blood cleanseth from all sin. But all this, it be well understood and borne in mind, only through the absolute fullness and sufficiency of what he was, and still is, his own person and life, as the Word enshrined in human flesh, the one ever living and only true Mediator between God and man. "The words that I speak unto you," he says himself, "they are spirit and they are life." His works served simply to manifest and show forth the reality of his superhuman nature, the power and glory of his indwelling Godhead. In the midst of all, and as it were behind and back of all, this superhuman existence, thus revealing itself in full union with the common conditions of our natural human life, is in and of itself the mystery of Godliness, through whose presence in the world the older mystery of sin is broken and destroyed. Away then with all Ebionitic, Arian and Socinian theories of Christ's person, by which he is made to be a man only, or some highly created intelligence in human form, empowered and enabled to make known the divine will. Away also with all Gnostic dreams, whether of ancient or modern type, by which his manifestation in the flesh is resolved into a mere apparition, and the whole Gospel turned at last into dogmatic speculation and vain spiritualistic fancy and conceit. Christ and Christianity are more immeasurably than any such Jewish or Ethnic construction. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world

who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. 1: 1-3.) He is the alpha and omega of the ways of God, the beginning of creation and its end. In him, the world received into lasting union with its fallen constitution the power of God's own life, as this had never been in it before; and he became thus as it were in the very heart of it, the centre and principle within it of a new creation, at once natural and supernatural—human, and yet infinitely more than human; which has already proved itself superior, in his own person, to all the powers of earth and hell, and which is destined to bring with it in the end like victory and redemption for all his people, "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Being of such constitution as we have now seen it to be, we may easily understand why the Gospel is represented as being available only for "them that believe;" and this may help us, at the same time, to form some just conception of what faith is in the sense of the Gospel. The Greek endeavored to grasp truth in its highest form, by his natural understanding; the carnal Jew insisted on having it made sure to him, through the medium of a mere wonder-work addressed to his senses; but in its proper reality as exhibited in the Incarnate Word, it was not possible for it to be apprehended in either of these ways. If perceived and accepted at all, it must be not on the strength of any evidence from a sphere lower than itself, but through an act of submission in the first place to what it claimed to be as a new order of life altogether in its own sphere. For minds rightly disposed indeed, there might be a preparation for acknowledging Christ on lower ground; as it is most certainly true that the wants and endeavors of humanity tend toward him everywhere as the consummation of their deepest and last sense; and both signs and wonders on the one hand, as we know, and philosophical speculation on the other, have served the purpose of convincing many that the truth was to be found in Christ and nowhere else. But what we mean to say is, that no such helps can ever be sufficient of themselves to authenti-

cate and make sure the actual sense of what the Gospel is in its own proper form. They may conduct us to the threshold of the Christian temple, but they cannot bring us fairly within the hallowed precincts of the temple itself. There is no such thing as taking the measure of this new creation, the "tabernacle of God with men," by any merely outside view, so as to have a rational judgment of what it means. To know it at all as it is, we must pass into it and make it our home; and the power by which it is possible for us to do this, is neither sense nor natural understanding, but what the Scriptures in distinction from both these denominate faith. It is the organ or faculty in us, by which through divine grace we yield ourselves at once passively and actively, to the authority of the Gospel regarded as a true revelation of God's presence in the world and so make room for it to accomplish its saving work upon us in its own way. It is full submission, first of all, in its Christian form, to the simple historical fact of the Incarnation which then draws after it a corresponding acknowledgment of all that is found to be involved in this fact for the full accomplishment of the world's redemption. To such faith the simple "preaching" or proclamation of the Gospel comes, "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" so that it has better foundation than any earthly knowledge or authority "not standing in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Thus it hath pleased God, we are told, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

All turns here upon faith. There is indeed wide room in Christianity for the exercise also of knowledge; "we preach wisdom," says St. Paul, "among them that are perfect," those fairly and properly initiated into this new order of truth, "ye are not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2: 6-8.) "In him," it is elsewhere said, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2: 3.) But the introduction to all this, the one fundamental condition of its being truly possible and access-



ble, is always the power of being able to say with the prince of the apostles: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16: 16.) "This is the work of God," our Saviour says—the one work, in which may be said to be comprehended all good works besides, and without which no act of pretended religion can be pleasing in his sight—"that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6: 29.) So in the apostolical commission: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16.) The grand criterion of true Christianity with St. John is nothing more than the simple power of believing and acknowledging the coming of Christ in the flesh, in opposition to Jewish Humanitarianism on the one hand, and Gentile Spiritualism on the other. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Again: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." (1 John 5: 1; 4: 2, 3.) "If our Gospel be hid," St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4: 3-6.)

We may see then how it is, that all right Christian theology, considered either as theoretical or practical, must, in the nature of the case, be Christological; having its ground and foundation in Christ, and moving throughout in the bosom of the great living and historical fact, which is exhibited to our faith in the constitution of his person.

All Christian doctrines, in the first place, root themselves in this way continually in him, and grow forth, everywhere, from the mystery of his Incarnation.

By him alone, we come to any true and proper knowledge of God; and this knowledge is not the result, merely, of his superior teaching; it shines upon us through his very being and life. He is himself such a manifestation of God in the



world, as had no place ever before, and could never be conceived of under any other form. God reveals himself, to a certain extent, in nature; the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. But this revelation is completely eclipsed, and thrown into the shade, by what took place when the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." (John 1: 14.) Only so, indeed, could it come to a real making known of the High and Holy One among men. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1: 18.) Christianity makes no account of the notion of God as it belongs to natural religion, and refuses to accept it at all, as borrowed from any quarter beyond itself. It owns him only under one form—that in which he appears as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is declared to be the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. "This is life eternal," our Saviour himself says, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," (John 17: 3;) not that God might be known first, and then Christ as being a true messenger of his will, but that he might be known through the knowledge of Christ, his Son, as the only way in which he could be truly and effectually known at all. No man knoweth who the Father is, we are told, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him, by making him known in this effectual way. (Luke 10: 22.)

The revelation of the Father, thus made through the Son, is, at the same time, a revelation of the Holy, Blessed and Glorious Trinity. The theological dogma here, again, is no philosophical speculation simply, but a divine fact, manifested and made sure for faith, through the new and near approach which God has been pleased to make toward men, in the mystery of the Incarnation. It comes into view as the underlying basis of that whole new order of things, which is brought to light through the Gospel; so that the believing knowledge of God in his Son Jesus Christ, is, of itself, in the end, the believing knowledge also of the Father and the Holy Ghost.

And what is thus true of the nature of God, is no less true of the nature of man. It is only by the knowledge of Christ,

that we ever come rightly to know ourselves. He is the key which unlocks for us the sense of the world's moral constitution, and the meaning of its universal history. What man was in the beginning, and what he has become through the fall, is made fully intelligible at last only through the work of redemption and salvation, which has been accomplished in his behalf by Christ. The new creation interprets the burden of the terrible riddle that lies everywhere on the old creation; the second Adam explains the first; the mystery of godliness lifts up the veil that otherwise hopelessly enshrouds the deep, dark mystery of sin.

Universally, we may say, our doctrine of God in one direction, and our doctrine of man in the other, must be conditioned by our doctrine of Christ, the Mediator between God and man. As is our Christology, whether consciously or unconsciously, so will ever be also our Theology and our Anthropology. False apprehensions of the constitution of Christ's person, whether Ebionitic or Gnostic, Nestorian or Eutychian, make it impossible to hold the dogma of the Trinity in its proper form; and they lead just as surely to heretical conceptions of the nature of man, and the whole work of his redemption; landing us on one side in Pelagianism, and on the other in Manichean necessity and fate.

It is only within the bosom of the Christological fact, thus, the "new world of grace" which is thrown open to our faith, by the coming of Christ in the flesh, that the doctrines of grace generally, as they are called, can be said to carry with them any reality or force. Torn from their living, organic union with this divine constitution, they become no better than hollow abstractions, and acquire in truth a positively false and anti-christian character. For is not this the very conception of Antichrist in the New Testament—a presence or power on the outside of Christ, claiming to be in such form the presence and power of Christ himself, and so working against him, professedly in his own name? The doctrine of the atonement is true, regarded as the power of a permanent fact comprehended in the death of Christ, followed by his resurrection; but, considered as something of force through his death alone, a sort of outward work which he came into the world to perform in this

way, and for which his incarnation was contrived and designed in the relation of means to end, the whole imagination becomes magical, and so visionary and false. Regeneration holds as a supernatural mystery in Christ only ; and justification by faith, that great article, as it has been called, of a standing or falling Church, deserves no confidence, except as it is made to include always the idea of a living apprehension of the Saviour himself, in his whole divine-human life. Without this, it ceases to be true, and is turned into a monstrous, pernicious error. It becomes, in the end, nothing better than justification by our own fancy or feeling, and subverts the proper conception of saving faith altogether.

The Christian doctrine of immortality again, is wholly mediated and conditioned by the coming of Christ in the flesh, and can never be apprehended or held rightly, except as a fact comprehended for faith in the movement of this great mystery. The so-called immortality of the soul, as we have it dreamed of for example by Socrates or Plato, and as it has become to be familiar to the common thinking of the modern world, is in no sense what Christianity requires us to believe on the subject of a future state. Life and immortality, in the Gospel view, as we have seen, are not recognized as having place for men at all in the simply natural constitution of the world as it now stands; they are brought to pass wholly by the conjunction of a higher life in Christ with our otherwise fallen and ruined nature, in virtue of which it has been made to triumph through him over the law of sin and the power of death ; they hold now in the sphere of this victorious redemption alone ; and they involve here, in conformity with the profoundly realistic character of the whole new creation in such form, not simply the continued existence of the soul, but the rising again of the body also from the dominion of the grave, and the consequent glorification of the entire man, both soul and body, in the power of a life that shall have no end. To believe in Christ crucified and risen from the dead, is to believe all this, as the necessary consequence of his appearing in the world to put away sin, ( Heb. 9: 26-28 ; 1 Thess. 4: 14 ; ) and it is not possible to conceive of it, or to believe it at all, in any other way.

. It would be easy to show, did time permit, how all practi-

cal Christianity, no less than that which is theoretical and doctrinal, resolves itself in like manner into the power of believing and confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. All evangelical duties, as well as all evangelical dogmas, root themselves, and have their necessity and obligation, strictly and truly in him alone, as being the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe. He is the principle thus of a new ethical creation, in the bosom of which all human relations and interests acquire a sense that cannot be said to belong to them in any other view. Only in Christ, and through Christ, can we do any thing well pleasing to God. Our whole obedience to him, as well as our whole knowledge of him, is conditioned by our "believing in him whom he hath sent." Only in Christ again, and through Christ, can we know and fulfill what we owe to our fellow men. Hence the moral precepts and admonitions of the Gospel are addressed everywhere, not to the world in its natural life, but to those who are regarded as having been planted in a new and higher order of life through union with Christ. They are throughout for the Christological sphere, and not for what may be denominated in distinction from this, the simply Humanitarian sphere—humanity, as it exists on the outside of the divine economy of the Gospel. Only in Christ, finally, and through Christ, can we be faithful to ourselves; understanding what is the true end of our lives, and considering as we ought our heavenly vocation, so as to escape in full the vanity of our present state, the "corruption that is in the world through lust," and thus be found of him in peace, when he shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

But we have more in Christ, under the view now before us, than either Christian doctrine or Christian duty, separately considered. Doctrines and duties flow together here in the form of life. The world of redemption to which they belong is a real, abiding constitution, brought to pass through the incarnation of the Son of God, in which are comprehended supernatural powers for the accomplishment of its own supernatural ends. It is not simply truth that comes by Jesus Christ, but "*grace and truth*;" as he is the revelation of God's mind and



will toward men, so is he also the revelation of strength and power for men, making it possible for them to be and to do what God requires. Christologically considered, the doctrines of the Gospel are all concrete realities and facts, embodying themselves perennial force for the salvation of the world; while the duties of the Gospel are at the same time privileges, glorious virtues and powers, going along with these facts, and growing forth from them indeed in the most real and necessary way. "As many as received him," it is said, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1: 12.) The redeeming forces of the new Mediatorial creation, the "powers of the world to come," the world of grace in distinction from the world of nature—abide in him, in the economy which originated with his incarnation, and still holds in the power of that undying fact, under the most actual form, whether their presence be perceived and acknowledged by men or not. They are there objectively, as we say, through all ages to the end of time. But they are there at the same time, for the appropriation of faith—that faith which bows before the great fact of Christ's advent in the flesh, and thus brings the soul within the sphere and range of its life-giving action. That is the nature of faith; it joins its subject with the objective life and energy of what he believes, so that it works in him also as part of his own life. To receive Christ in this way, is not simply to have the "flesh," or the natural mind, stimulated by new lessons and motives; it is to be "born of the Spirit," and thus set in communication with an order of existence which is more than flesh, and higher than all the powers of nature. "What the law could not do," it is said, "in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemning sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8: 3, 4.) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5: 16.) To believe that Jesus is the Christ, according to St. John, is to be "born of God;" and whatsoever is thus born of God, "overcometh the world"—carries in it the principle and power of superiority to



he world. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5: 4, 5.)

In the Christological view, then, of which we are now speaking, there is no room to conceive of any such separation as is sometimes imagined to have place between the doctrines of Christianity and its duties or precepts. There is such a thing, we know, as a doctrinal orthodoxy, which works disastrously to the interests of practical piety, substituting a mere dry theory of religion for its life, and sacrificing both the claims of the heart, and the obligations of the hand, to the cold office of the head. And there is such a thing, we know also on the other hand, as a practical zeal for religion, which works no less disastrously to the interests of theological truth, substituting mere feeling for faith, and making doctrines to be in great measure a matter of indifference altogether. Wherever this unnatural divorce prevails, however, it will be found to result from an unchristological, which is therefore also an essentially anti-christian posture of mind. On the outside of the world of grace itself, as we have it unfolded for the apprehension of faith in the person and work of Christ, it is not possible indeed that there should be any true organic conjunction of these two interests, the doctrinal and the practical, in the conception of Christianity. They hold to each other necessarily a merely external relation, in which we have exhibited to us again, in truth, the old antagonism of Jewish and Gentile thinking, in regard to the person of Christ himself. Christian doctrine becomes a sort of Gnostic abstraction on the one hand; while the Christian life, on the other hand, is made to resolve itself into a poor Ebionitic humanitarianism, which may be acted upon spasmodically at times by the *thought* of higher powers, but is never brought into union with them really in any true and lasting way. But just so soon as our Christian thinking comes to be ruled and determined by the objective process of Christianity itself, as we have it revealed to the view of faith, in what Christ has become and still continues to be in the history of the world for the salvation of men, a full end is made to all such bad and mischievous dualism. Dogma and life become

one, and are no longer capable of being held asunder. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is found to be in the highest degree practical, underlying in truth the universal scheme of the Gospel. So the doctrine of Christ's eternal generation. So all the doctrines that have to do directly with the incarnation and the hypostatical union, with the death and resurrection of Christ, with the sending of the Holy Ghost, with the constitution and powers of the Holy Catholic Church, and with the coming again of our Lord and Saviour at the last day. Apprehended in its living relation to Christ, and held in the order which belongs to it, in the actual working of the Mediatorial economy revealed through his person, every Christian truth has in it the nature of spirit and life, and is felt to be a power at once both of religious affection and religious action. If to any mind it may seem otherwise, there can be no sure evidence that for such a mind the right apprehension of Christian doctrine is itself wanting. And so on the other side: if the life and practice of Christianity are felt by any to be something independent of its doctrines, in their necessary Christological order and connection, we may be very sure that it is because they have not yet learned at all what the Christian life means, and that their practical Christianity, therefore, is no proper Christianity at all, but only a bastard imitation of it, made to stand in its place. Doctrine and practice, theory and life, in the true Christian system, go hand in hand together—having their common root always in the lively apprehension of the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh," (1 Tim. 3: 16,) through the power of faith.

Theology, then, in the Christian sense, whether doctrinal or practical, if it is to be worthy of confidence, must be Christological. As a science, it must be answerable to the actual constitution of the revelation which God has been pleased to make of himself by his Son Jesus Christ. It must have its beginning, middle and end in him, who is thus in truth the alpha and omega of the universal new creation in this form. We may have different systems of divinity, different ways of arranging and putting together the truths of Christianity for didactic or confessional purposes; but, properly speaking, there can be but one way for the conception of them as an organic

whole ; that, namely, in which they exhibit themselves for our believing apprehension, as having their common root or principle in the fact of the Incarnation, and as growing forth from this, in obedience to what may be termed the necessary law of its own historical development. All Christian truths, so far as their inward substance is concerned, branch forth from this fundamental mystery, and become the object of Christian faith, and so of true Christian science also, only as they include in themselves some portion of its life and power. They are of Christological origin and construction. We may not be required to make use of them theologically always in the one order and form that belong to them in this view. We are at liberty to represent them in a Catechism, or Confession of faith, or Body of Divinity, under other aspects and connections, just as the life of the vegetable world, for instance, may be resolved for the purposes of knowledge, into different schemes of scientific botany. But in every such case we are still required to bear in mind always the original, living and concrete organization of the Gospel, the way in which the whole flows from Christ, and to make this a rule for determining the value and significance of all that may be embraced in our particular system. The criterion which St. John gives for trying spirits, we are bound here to apply also to doctrines. Every doctrine that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, every article or topic of confessional divinity which is of true Christological growth, is of God, and worthy of all confidence and trust ; whereas, on the other hand, every theological tenet or opinion, which is not thus Christological in its constitution, which comes forth from some other principle than the historical fact of the Incarnation, is not of God, but must be regarded rather as an antichristian element, that should be thrust out from the Christian system altogether. In its whole material at least, every system of Christian doctrine, large or small, ought to be Christological ; and it would seem that as a matter of course it ought to be so in form also ; following in thought and representation, as much as possible, the actual movement of the Christian redemption itself.

But if this be important for systematic divinity, and the use of the school, it must be counted yet more necessary for homi-

letic divinity, and the ordinary use of the pulpit. We have here unquestionably the only sure and safe rule for all popular preaching. "We *preach* Christ crucified," says the Apostle, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Again: "When I came unto you, I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2: 12.) This is sometimes taken to mean simply ringing changes on the death of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith, viewed in a mechanical and separate way; and it is not uncommon then to have the preaching of the cross, as it is called, so conducted as to defeat, in a large measure, the very meaning and object of the rule itself, which is here brought into view. But the doctrine of the cross, in its New Testament sense, is no spiritualistic abstraction; it is the living centre, we may say, of the universal movement of Christ's life, having its significance wholly in its antecedents and consequents embraced in this life; and, what St. Paul means, therefore, by preaching Christ and him crucified, is nothing more nor less than the simple proclamation of the Gospel, as comprehended in the real, and not merely imaginary, coming of Christ into the world, in the sense of St. John; a fact that involved of itself his humiliation and death, through which only it was possible for him to "enter into his glory," (Luke 24: 26;) and which was shown in this way also, accordingly, to be all that it claimed to be for the apprehension of faith. Such we find to be in truth the character of the Apostolical preaching generally, so far as it comes before us, in the New Testament. The burden of it is always, as with St. Paul at Athens, "Jesus and the resurrection;" Christ dying, and rising again from the dead, so as to be the author of a new order of life for his people, which is to be fully revealed when he shall appear again to judge the world. The Apostles had but one view of their office, in this respect: they were to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection. (Acts 1: 22.) Such was the reigning thought of St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost; and we find him, on other occasions afterwards, still insisting



always on the same general theme. So it is, with what is reported to us of the missionary discourses of St. Paul. In one word, every reader of the Acts of the Apostles knows how uniformly this style of preaching comes there into view. The Gospel is assumed to be, throughout, the stupendous fact of the Incarnation, drawing after it the leading results of Christ's life: his death, his resurrection, his glorification at the right hand of God, his sending of the Holy Ghost, his continuous mediatorial reign, and his triumphant appearing again at the last day; and it is the holding up of these great historical truths precisely to the view of faith, which is supposed to constitute the preaching of the Gospel, and to make it the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation.

And let no one say that this style of preaching is to be considered elementary or rudimental only, and such as was needed for laying the foundations of the Christian life in those who were first converted to Christianity. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does, indeed, distinguish between what he considers the rudiments of Christianity, in this view, and more advanced truths. "Leaving the principles (or beginnings) of the doctrine of Christ," he says, "let us go on unto perfection," press forward to more full knowledge; "not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment"—that is, not moving perpetually in the circle of these first, fundamental verities, without ever getting in any way beyond them. (Heb. 6: 12.) But this distinction, certainly, does not imply, that "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" in such form, were to be held of secondary account in the Christian system, or that they might be ever so left behind, as to make room for another order of Christian thinking altogether. It means just the contrary, namely, that these principles are already fixed as the "foundation" of all subsequent knowledge, and that whatever is built upon them, therefore, must partake of the character of that on which it is thus required to rest; according to what is said in another place: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor.



3: 11.) In other words, the rudimental truths of the Gospel, its first grand Christological outline, must regulate and determine all that it is brought to embrace more perfectly afterward, in the way either of knowledge or life. It is only what we might expect, therefore, when we find the Apostolical Epistles of the New Testament also constructed throughout on this view. Addressed, as they are, to regularly established Christian congregations, and in some cases at least going far beyond the first truths of Christianity, they yet never break away from that order of thought, by which Christianity is made to resolve itself into the idea of a new creation, proceeding historically from the coming of Christ in the flesh. So it is with St. John, of course; so it is with St. Peter; and so it is also with St. Paul. He indeed has been sometimes claimed as the representative of a different doctrinal scheme, but with manifest injustice and wrong. All his teaching, even where it is most abstruse and "hard to understand," is conditioned by what we may call the organism of the Incarnation—moves and has its being from first to last in this world of faith, and in this alone. No one can make more account of the death of Christ; but it is always in connection with the thought of his resurrection. No one can affirm more strongly the doctrine of justification by faith; but the faith that justifies is in his view always the same, that by setting us in communion with the life of Christ becomes at the same time a power within us of conformation to his image. No one can lay greater stress on the idea of election; but this gracious distinction with him is one that holds only in Christ, and applies to all who have come to be united to him by baptism, carrying with it the most real right and title to salvation, but leaving it in the power of men, nevertheless, to make their heavenly calling void. How intensely Christological the whole thinking of St. Paul is, in regard to the Gospel, any one may see, especially by considering attentively his Epistle to the Ephesians, where all turns—predestination, adoption, justification and everything else, on the objective significance of Christ's mediatorial power and glory, as they have come to be displayed through his resurrection from the dead.

Let us learn, finally, from this whole subject, to place a pro-

per value on the *Apostles' Creed*, the acknowledged primary symbol, not only of our own particular branch of the Church, but of the Church Universal, as it has stood throughout ages. We do not suppose, of course, that the Creed has come down to us in its present exact form from the apostles themselves. We know that there were various creeds in the first Christian centuries, as there were various liturgies also, differing more or less from one another at different points. But we know, likewise, with all this, that these creeds contained for substance one and the same faith, and this also exhibited always in the same general form—just as the early liturgies are so many variations simply of one and the same system of public worship. The common character of the ancient catholic creeds, in this respect, the uniformity of their fundamental conception, showing itself as it does, through all their circumstantial differences, is the strongest proof we could well have of the unity of the Catholic faith in the first ages, and we may add also an unanswerable argument for the Apostolical origin of that faith. The so called Apostles' Creed is simply one among these old concurrent forms of doctrine, accepted in the course of time as a fixed, common standard, and made to be thus of ecumenical authority and use. In it we have, accordingly, what we are bound to receive as a true sketch or outline of the fundamental truths of Christianity, “even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word.” Its authority is in its constitution, no less than in its origin. It is the primary, necessary conception of the Gospel, a direct transcript, we may say, from the living fact of Christianity itself, as we have it revealed for the contemplation of faith in the person of Christ. It is not possible to conceive of the essential nature of Christianity, its fundamental, organic substance and power, in any other form. There can be no other way of representing the foundation truths of the new creation in Christ Jesus, that may deserve to be considered equal to this; to imagine anything of that sort, is to betray at once a defective apprehension of what the Gospel means. There can be but one true order of faith in Christ, and this is the order which is exhibited to us in the Apostles' Creed. No other disposition of the subject, either as to matter or form, can

do justice to it in the same way; because this is the only method that is truly Christological, and as such answerable truly to what the subject is in its own nature.

This does not mean, of course, that the Apostles' Creed contains in form all that Christianity requires us to believe; or that we do not need other, more full and extensive summaries of Christian doctrine for religious use. It does mean, however, that all other such summaries can be entitled to regard, only as they plant themselves on this original platform of faith, and endeavor to carry out the sense of Christianity in constant agreement with its radical idea and law. In the creed, we have the "first principles of the oracles of God," the fundamental "type of doctrine," and "form of sound words," (Rom. 6: 17; 2 Tim. 1: 13,) into which it is necessary that the mind of a believer should be cast first of all, in order that he may be a believer at all, in the Christian sense of the term; faith starts in this form, and if it is to continue true to itself, can never leave it behind, or break away from it, so as to show itself configured, subsequently, to some altogether different scheme. Its enlargement must be, to the end, a legitimate growth always from its own root. In this sense, all Christian doctrines are to be Christological; and they become the proper object of Christian belief, and the proper object of Christian science, only as they serve to express and set forth what is implicitly at least involved in the Apostles' Creed. That must be considered the measure and form, therefore, for all other forms of confessional belief—the rule, by which we are to determine what things properly belong to the sphere of Christian faith; and also the place that should be assigned to them in this sphere. No catechism, or confession, no system of divinity, no pulpit-teaching, or family-training, can at all deserve confidence, which either openly affects to show some better way of learning Christ, or at least so forgets the creed, as to make no practical account of it whatever in the business of religious instruction.

It is one of the chief recommendations of our own denominational symbol—the Heidelberg Catechism—that it so distinctly recognizes the authority of this Apostolical scheme of faith, and holds it up to view so steadily as the grand normative stand-

ard of what it intends to be, the sense and scope of its own instructions. To the question, "What is it then necessary for a Christian to believe?" the Catechism, without any qualification or reserve, makes answer: "All that is promised us in the Gospel, which the articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach in sum;" and then goes on, accordingly, to proclaim these articles, as we have them in the creed, and to make them in form the text and basis of its theological teaching. Let no one say, then, that we make too much of the ecclesiastical importance of this formulary. However it may be with any other Protestant bodies, we of the German Reformed Church at least, have not renounced the privilege of still holding fast, what was considered to be in this form, when Protestantism first arose, the one common faith of the universal Christian world. Our particular Reformed Christianity claims to be rooted and grounded in the general Catholic Christianity of all ages. Our confessionalism starts not in the sixteenth century, but in the first; not in the Heidelberg Catechism, but in the Apostles' Creed. We not only may, but if faithful to the catechism, *must* subordinate the later symbol to that which it owns to be older and greater than itself. It is both our duty, and our right, to believe the creed, the whole creed, and nothing but the creed—that is, nothing but what is in organic agreement with it, without any sort of compromise or reservation. There our orthodoxy begins. That is the matter of our church faith in its deepest and most radical form. So we believe, and therefore, both in Catechism and Liturgy, so also we speak.

It is in full keeping then, with the spirit of this Tercentenary Jubilee, that it should be improved as an occasion, not only to revive our zeal for the Heidelberg Catechism, but to confirm and intensify also, if it may be possible, our interest in the Apostles' Creed. To honor the catechism is to honor the creed; as, on the other hand, to magnify the creed, is to magnify also the catechism, which is built upon it, and ruled by it, to such large extent. We may say, indeed, that no regard professed for the Heidelberg Catechism, no zeal shown for it at this time, as the acknowledged ensign and banner of our German Reformed Church, can be at all liberal or honest, which does not carry along with it, at the same time, devotion to the creed, and



zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, in this olden form. And under such view it has seemed to me, moreover, that no subject could be more fitly offered for consideration on the present occasion, in connection with the opening of the General Synod, by which it is proposed to unite now in one body, solemnly and in form, the universal German Reformed Church of this country. May we not hope that this auspicious event especially, will serve to make memorable our Tercentenary Year as an epoch indeed in the history of the Church, the beginning of a new stadium for its whole ecclesiastical life? How important, in that case, that the new order of things thus introduced should be inaugurated in a spirit worthy of the proper genius of the church, and answerable to its true historical constitution and mission. If we are to be joined together effectually as one body, and to flourish and become strong in our unity, it must be by having a character of our own, a common denominational consciousness; and this we can have only, by understanding our own past history, so as to stand rooted in it, not slavishly, but with living freedom, in a way at once faithful to the claims of the present, and true to the demands of the past. We owe it to ourselves, to be a Church of the Reformation; but a Church of the Reformation, owning communion still with the faith and life of the Church Catholic in the first ages. This requires not simply fealty to the Heidelberg Catechism; but fealty to the Heidelberg Catechism, as echoing the sense, and breathing the Christological soul, of the Apostles' Creed. Here, undoubtedly, if we are to be of any account for Protestantism, and the general interest of Christianity in the country, will be found the secret of our strength, the *hoc signo vinces* of our denominational banner. I see no other object worth caring for, or working for, in our separate church capacity; no other, that might not be secured just as well by our being some other religious body; no other, therefore, that can at all justify or make respectable our seemingly sectarian organization. Here, however, we have a great purpose set before us, providentially, we may say, in the history of the Church itself, which, if vigorously embraced by us, cannot fail to make our existence important to others as well as to ourselves. "Who knoweth but that for such a time as



this," indeed, and for the service now needed in such form as this, God may have been pleased to preserve us thus far as a small remnant people among the "thousands of Israel?" Could we have any more honorable service at His hands, than to be made witnesses in this way for the old Christian creed, and for that Christological method of teaching and preaching the Gospel, which can be effectually maintained only on the basis of the creed? Let us not then show ourselves unworthy of this "testimony of Jesus," seeing we are thus called and set apart to it, as it were, by God himself; but let us rather fall in joyfully with what seems to be his counsel in our favor, and endeavor to carry it out, through evil report and through good report, faithfully unto the end.

Strange that there should be any possibility of evil report in such a case as this, on the part at least of those who call themselves Christians. And yet, to the German Reformed Church in this country, as we know, it has already been "given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake," precisely in this strange way. Our orthodoxy has been called in question for making earnest with the articles of the Apostles' Creed; and we have been denounced as not evangelical, because we have tried to be Christological, proclaiming Christ himself to be sum and substance of his own blessed Evangel. For whatever of distinctive peculiarity there may be in what has come to be known and spoken of, as our "Mercersburg Theology," it will be found all to resolve itself at last into this: that it makes more of the Incarnation, more of the person of Christ, more of the objective, supernatural movement of the Christian salvation—and in so doing comes into more active sympathy with the faith of apostolical and primitive times, than any other theology known at present in the American Protestant Church. If it have any other character or meaning, I for one, at least, am ready to disown it, and to say, let it perish. As a Church, we have endeavored to bear witness to the truth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and to follow out this great mystery of godliness to its necessary historico-theological consequences and results; and for doing this, we have been vilified and covered with reproach. Men have cried out against us, from all sides, as though we had

brought some new and strange doctrine to their ears ; and what we have held to be the very Gospel itself, in this old Christological form, has proved to be, as of old, a stumbling block in one direction, and complete foolishness in another.

But the time has past for us to be much moved or disturbed by any outward judgment of this sort. We have gained at least so much insight into our own position, and along with this such power of understanding also the position of those by whom we have been thus judged, that we are not likely now, I think, to become "soon shaken in mind," or to lose our proper ecclesiastical self-possession, by any amount of opposition that can be brought to bear upon us in this form. How should it be expected that we should bow here to the force of a judgment, which refuses to own what we know to be the first principles of Christianity itself, as they are set forth in the New Testament, and which stultifies the universal faith of the early Christian world? Of what weight for us, believing as we do in the Apostles' Creed, should be the theological notions and dictations of men, with whom the creed has fallen into utter neglect—not heard in their churches, not taught in their families, not laid up in their memories or hearts? Or, still worse, of men, who on principle disown the creed; are "free to confess that it has forsaken" their camp; charge it with unevangelical heresy and error; and have the unblushing effrontery to tell us that it is dead, that it has become "the fossil relic of by-gone ages," and that they now "look with a sort of pity upon those who are laboring to infuse life into it, and to set it up as a living ruler in the Church!"\* Having learned to think of the Gospel Christologically, and so to recognize the presence of heavenly realities, and of powers more than natural in the constitution of the Christian Church, what can there be to make us doubtful at all of this better faith, in the opinions of those, however respectable in the Christian world, who make the principle of Christianity to be the decree of election, the idea of the atonement, or any mere dogma in the human mind—something in God (Calvinism), or something in man (Pelagianism), outside of the theanthropic mystery, Jesus Christ—and so

---

\* Puritan Recorder, a. 1849.

land us in a theory of the Gospel at last, by which the whole conception of the Church is transmuted into an Ebionitic trope, or an unsubstantial Gnostic myth? Having been brought to know something of the "powers of the world to come," as they are comprehended objectively in the actual forms of the new creation itself, it is not to be imagined surely, that we should give up this "heavenly vision" now, at the mere bidding of such as have never yet learned to see it at all, but with huge self complacency arrogate to themselves the title of evangelical, and the character of spiritual, just because they run away with the notion of what is purely subjective and experimental in the Gospel, and systematically close their eyes against its whole sacramental teaching—turning into a nullity in this way full half the New Testament, which they yet affect to revere as the unerring text book of their faith.

Let it be our determination rather, brethren in the ministry and eldership in the Reformed Church—the Church of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Apostles' Creed—to hold fast the profession of our faith in this good form steadfastly unto the end; being firmly persuaded, that we are here at least on a general foundation which can never be moved, and that our testimony cannot fail to be felt with salutary effect in the end—as we may trust indeed it has begun to be already—on the general Christianity of our land. Let this testimony of Jesus, the Son of God, who is at the same time the Son of Mary, be our confidence and strength now, as it is sure, if steadily persisted in, to be our glory and renown hereafter.

Be it ours, then, whether in our theological seminaries or in our pulpits—in the face of all opposing Jewish or Ethnic constructions of the Gospel—to preach "Christ, and him crucified." Let us not shrink from following out the movement of this world-historical fact, in its own Christological order, as we have it set forth by the "articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith" in the creed; being well assured, that in no other way can the Gospel proclamation prove itself so effectually to be both the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation.

Where Christ is preached in this way, we may miss, it is true, much of what passes for evangelical preaching, in certain quar-

ters, at the present day; but we need not fear that our pulpits will be either stripped of dignity, or shorn of force, on this account. Our themes, and our manner of handling them, will not be in the sentimental, or sensational, or revivalistic vein affected by some; nor will they be of the political, humanitarian, or simply essayistic order, which has come to be so common with others. And to many they may appear to be wanting, just for this bad reason, in practical point and force. But they will be of a kind, far more sure in the end to engage commanding interest, and to carry with them enduring effect. There will be a difference in our preaching to be felt, even where the reason of it may not at once be understood; a difference, which will show itself partly in the peculiarity of our topics, but still more in the way in which all topics shall be brought to appear in new relations, and to breathe, as it were, a new spirit. There is what we may call a Christological element, in which a whole order of thought shall be so baptized and steeped, as to be at all points different from what lies beyond it. We feel it in the universal thinking of the early Christian church. The Patristic literature is full of it. We can hardly read a page, for example, of St. Chrysostom, or St. Augustine, on any subject, without feeling its presence. We should aim at something of the same sort, in all our sanctuary ministrations, preaching Christ, and him crucified, in the realistic order of the ancient Christian faith; and then, as Christ is true to himself, it will be found that the Gospel thus preached, whether in weakness or strength, will be now, as of old, mighty through God, for the accomplishment of its own ends, far beyond all it can ever effect, preached in any other way.

It is not too much, in view of the whole subject, to say, that the power of using and appreciating the creed may be taken as a sure criterion, universally, of the power of preaching the Gospel in this only right Christological spirit and manner. Where the creed is either disowned or fallen into disuse, both theology and preaching will be prevailingly of a wholly different complexion.

Themes which must be considered vital to the Christian system, Christologically considered, will receive little or no attention; or, if noticed at all occasionally, will be noticed only



in an unpractical, speculative way, as not entering exactly into the heart and marrow of the Gospel. No stress will be put upon the Incarnation, as being, itself, the root of all evangelical thinking; and the mysteries connected with it, the miraculous conception, the dignity of the Virgin Mother, the hypostatical union, the historical unfolding of the Saviour's powers, will be counted matters for curious rather than profitable inquiry; a mere Gnostic apprehension of the general notion that Christ was the Son of God, being supposed to be all that faith has to do with, in the case. There may be, then, much emphasis laid on the death of Christ, and its associated ideas of sacrifice and atonement; but you will hear nothing of the descent to hades—nothing of the overmastering work of redemption going forward in the under-world—nothing, to much purpose, of the outbursting result of all this, in the Saviour's rising again from the dead. It is wonderful, indeed, to what an extent this unchristological preaching, in glaring contrast with the preaching of the Apostles and the early Church, has allowed this whole topic—the necessary complement of all that is significant in Christ's death—to fall out of sight and practical consideration. Here, at least, there is no room for that old charge of preaching "Jesus and the Resurrection," as though the one were a sort of counterpart thought to the other. And if we hear but little of Christ's resurrection, we hear still less of his ascension into heaven, of his sitting at the right hand of God, of the sending of the Holy Ghost, of the founding of the Christian Church, of the endowment of the Church with supernatural ascension gifts, and of the winding up of all this grand drama of the world's redemption in the second coming of Christ. We will not say that these topics are systematically thrust aside as of no account for the practical ends of the Gospel; but they are certainly not insisted upon, as being the very life and power of the Gospel. They are not woven into the presentation of Christianity, so as to show that they are felt to be the one only true and necessary conception of what it is, wherever it is brought to view.

And this defect, then, necessarily conditions the way, also, in which all other Christian doctrines will be apprehended and preached. Even where the same doctrine, ostensibly, is pro-

claimed, it will not carry with it, in such circumstances, the same sense exactly that is felt to belong to it in proper conjunction with the creed. The articles of religion will be exhibited in different order, under other aspects, in other relations and proportions; and so, ultimately, with different accent, also, and signification. It would be easy to show how in being divorced from the consciousness of the creed in this way, and thus torn, at the same time, from their proper Christological ground, all evangelical truths, such, for example, as justification by faith, regeneration, the authority of the Bible, the obligation of the Sabbath, must necessarily fall over more or less into the sphere of mere nature, or Gnostic spiritualism, and in this way cease to be evangelical altogether. It would be easy to show, moreover, how all Christian duties and works, all Christian virtues and graces, enforced from any other standpoint, degenerate into the mere might and power of man, setting themselves up profanely to be "the great power of God." But it would carry us too far, to go into the subject now, with any sort of detail; and it must suffice to refer to it, therefore, in this general way, as serving to show the truth of our present general proposition; namely, that it is not possible to preach the Gospel with full effect, where it is not felt necessary to preach it in full sympathy with the Christological order and spirit of the Apostles' Creed.

It is sad to think, how much of what claims to be the preaching of the Gospel at the present time, stands broadly condemned by this simple rule. Indeed the very title, Evangelicalism, has come to be monopolized, to a large extent, by those who pretend to hold and preach the Gospel in no connection with the Christological method of the creed; and who, silently at least if not openly, repudiate this method, as being in its necessary tendencies and results, opposed to what they take to be the true sense of the Gospel. With this large class of persons, to make much of the historical facts and realities of Christ's life, to put emphasis on the doctrine of the Church, to believe in sacramental grace, or to own the idea of an altar in Christian worship, is at once something unevangelical. The Gospel with them, and the Church, are hopelessly antagonistic terms. Their theology is too orthodox, to be Christological; their

Christianity too spiritualistic, to feel itself at home in the flesh and blood surroundings of the old Christian creed.

I have endeavored, Christian brethren, in this *concio ad clerum*, with proper regard to the solemnity of the present occasion, and in harmony with what, as it seems to me, should be the reigning spirit of our Tercentenary Year, to "show unto you a more excellent way" of preaching the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. And I know not that I can better close now what I have been trying to say, than in the words of that grand outburst of Christological feeling, (*tot verba, tot tonitrua*;) with which St. Paul addresses the saints at Ephesus: "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him! The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe. According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 17-23.)

And now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN.

